

Sūrah Al-Lail

(The Night)

This Sūrah is Makkī, and it has 21 verses

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

With the name of Allah, the All-Merciful, the Very-Merciful

Verses 1 - 21

وَاللَّيْلِ إِذَا يَغْشَى ﴿١﴾ وَالنَّهَارِ إِذَا تَجَلَّى ﴿٢﴾ وَمَا خَلَقَ الذَّكَرَ
وَالْأُنثَى ﴿٣﴾ إِنَّ سَعْيَكُمْ لَشَتَّى ﴿٤﴾ فَأَمَّا مَنْ أَعْطَى وَاتَّقَى ﴿٥﴾
وَصَدَّقَ بِالْحُسْنَى ﴿٦﴾ فَسَنِيْسِرُهُ لِلْيُسْرَى ﴿٧﴾ وَأَمَّا مَنْ بَخِلَ
وَأَسْتَغْنَى ﴿٨﴾ وَكَذَّبَ بِالْحُسْنَى ﴿٩﴾ فَسَنِيْسِرُهُ لِلْعُسْرَى ﴿١٠﴾
وَمَا يُغْنِي عَنْهُ مَالُهُ إِذَا تَرَدَّى ﴿١١﴾ إِنَّ عَلَيْنَا لَلْهُدَى ﴿١٢﴾ وَإِنَّ لَنَا
لَلْآخِرَةَ وَالْأُولَى ﴿١٣﴾ فَأَنْذَرْتُكُمْ نَارًا تَلَظَّى ﴿١٤﴾ لَا لَصْلِبَهَا إِلَّا
الْأَشْقَى ﴿١٥﴾ الَّذِي كَذَّبَ وَتَوَلَّى ﴿١٦﴾ وَسَيَجْزِيهَا الْآتَى ﴿١٧﴾
الَّذِي يُؤْتِي مَالَهُ يَتَزَكَّى ﴿١٨﴾ وَمَا لِأَحَدٍ عِنْدَهُ مِنْ نِعْمَةٍ تُجْزَى ﴿١٩﴾
إِلَّا ابْتِغَاءَ وَجْهِ رَبِّهِ الْأَعْلَى ﴿٢٠﴾ وَلَسَوْفَ يَرْضَى ﴿٢١﴾

I swear by the night when it covers (the sun), [1] and by the day when it is unveiled, [2] and by the One who created the male and the female, [3] your efforts are diverse: [4] As for the one who gives (in charity) and fears Allah, [5] and believes in the best (religion), [6] We will facilitate for him the way to extreme ease (i.e. the comforts of Paradise). [7] But the one who is miser and deems himself self-sufficient, [8] and rejects the best

(religion), [9] for him We will facilitate the way to extreme distress. [10] And his wealth will not help him when he will fall down (into Hell). [11] Of course, it is undertaken by Us to guide, [12] and in Our control is the Hereafter and the worldly life. [13] So I have warned you of a blazing fire. [14] None will enter it but the wretched one [15] who rejected (the truth) and turned away (from it). [16] And saved from it will be the most God-fearing one, [17] who gives his wealth (in charity) to become purified, [18] while no one has conferred any favour on him for which he would give a return, [19] but (he gave his wealth in charity) only to seek the Countenance of his Lord, the Most High. [20] And surely he will soon be happy. [21]

Commentary

إِنَّ سَعْيَكُمْ لَشَتَّى (your efforts are diverse....92:4). This statement is like the statement in Sūrah Inshiqāq, verse [6]:


إِنَّكَ كَادِحٌ إِلَىٰ رَبِّكَ كَدْحًا

'O man, you have to work hard constantly to reach your Lord.
[84:6]

which has already been explained in that Sūrah. The sense is that man, by his nature, is used to making efforts for one objective or another. But the nature and the results of these efforts are different. Some people work hard for an objective that brings eternal happiness to them, and others work hard for an objective that makes them suffer eternal perdition. It is reported in a Tradition that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ said: "Each morning when a man gets up, he goes to conduct his business and keeps himself busy. His business is either successful and emancipates himself from Hell, or unsuccessful and his efforts become the cause of his destruction." Therefore, a wise person should first apply his mind to think whether his efforts will pay dividends, and he should never undertake those efforts that bring about temporary comfort and pleasure, but eternal perdition and grief.

The Two Diverse Types of Human Efforts Divide Humankind into Two Groups

The Qur'ān further shows that, broadly speaking, the humankind may be divided into two opposing groups in terms of their opposing efforts. Each of the two groups are characterised by three qualities. The

first group is a successful one, and its three characteristics are: [1] they give in charity in the cause of Allah; [2] fear Allah and avoid violating the injunctions of Allah in every aspect of life; and [3] believe in the 'best word'. The 'best words' refer to the credo of 'there is no god but Allah' [as Ibn 'Abbās, Ḍaḥḥāk  have explained]. Testifying to the *kalimah* signifies 'to profess the True Faith'. Faith or belief is the essence of all actions, and comes first in order of rank, but on this occasion, it is mentioned last, probably because the main theme in this context is that of physical exertion, efforts and actions. 'Īmān or faith, on the other hand, pertains to the heart. It signifies the acceptance and confirmation of Allah and His Messenger with one's heart. Confession of this must be made by means of reciting *kalimah shahādah* 'testimony of faith'. Obviously, none of these things involve physical exertion or effort, nor are they generally counted as actions.

The second group is [the unsuccessful one] and its three characteristics are: [1] they are misers to such an extent that they even fail to pay the *zakāh* and other obligatory alms; [2] they deem themselves self-sufficient rather than obeying Allah; and [3] they reject the 'best word' [that is, the *kalimah* of 'Īmān]. Referring to the first group, the verse says:

فَسَنِيْسِرُهُ لِّلْءِيسْرِى (We will facilitate for him the way to extreme ease [i.e. the comforts of Paradise]....92:7). The word *yusrā* literally denotes 'ease and comfort' or a thing in which there is no difficulty, but here it refers to "Paradise". Likewise, referring to the second group it says:

فَسَنِيْسِرُهُ لِّلْءِيسْرِى (for him We will facilitate the way to extreme distress...92:10). The opposite of *yusrā* is '*usrā* which literally denotes 'extreme distress, referring to "Hell"'. The two statements signify that those who exert their efforts in the first three acts, that is, spending in the cause of Allah, fearing Allah and testifying to the *kalimah*, Allah will pave their way to extreme ease, that is, to deeds that will lead them to the comforts of Paradise. On the other hand, those who exert their efforts in the latter three acts, Allah will pave their way to extreme distress, that is, make easy for them to perform deeds that will lead them to Hell. By right, here it should have been said that the deeds of Paradise or Hell are made easy for them, because 'easy' or 'difficult' qualify deeds, and not persons or people. But the Qur'ān says that the people or the people themselves

will be made easy to do the deeds. This probably implies that the first group will be predisposed to behave in a particular way that behaving otherwise will make them feel uneasy. The second group will be predisposed to behave in a way that will make them feel comfortable to do deeds of Hell, and they will feel uneasy doing deeds of Paradise. Each of these two groups will have their own nature and predisposition, and will find it easier to behave in that particular way. A Ḥadīth confirms that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ said:

اعملوا فكل ميسر لما خلق له، أما من كان من اهل السعادة فييسر لعمل السعادة
وأما من كان من اهل الشقاوة فييسر لعمل اهل الشقاوة

"Perform deeds, for everyone will have the deeds of what he was created for [Paradise or Hell] made easy for him. Those people who are the people of happiness, they will have the deeds of the people of happiness made easy for them. And those who are the people of misery, they will have the deeds of the people of misery made easy for them."

But both these things are the results of the use of the God-given choice and free will. Therefore, man is rewarded or punished.

Thereafter the unfortunate inmates of Hell are warned, thus:

وَمَا يُغْنِي عَنْهُ مَالُهُ إِذَا تَرَدَّى (And his wealth will not help him when he will fall down...92:11). The word *taraddā* literally denotes 'to fall into a pit and perish'. The expression 'When he fall' signifies that when Divine decree regarding his destruction comes into operation, nothing - not even his wealth - will save him, whether in grave after his death, or on the Day of Judgement, when he will be falling into the abyss of Hell.

الَّذِي كَذَّبَ وَتَوَلَّى (None will enter it but the wretched one who rejected [the truth] and turned away....92:16). This describes the fire of Hell. It is quite clear that only a *kāfir* will reject Allah and His Messenger. Apparently, it seems that a sinful believer who does not reject the truth will not enter Hell, whereas the Qur'ān and Ḥadīth are replete with clear texts that a sinful believer will enter Hell, unless he had repented, or someone interceded for him, or was forgiven out of pure Grace. He will abide in Hell until he has received punishment for the sins he has committed. After paying for his sins, he will be taken out of Hell, and through the blessings of his faith, he will be admitted into Paradise.

Apparently, the wordings of the verse are contrary to this interpretation. Therefore, it is necessary that the interpretation of the verse under comment be brought in line with other Qur'ānic verses and authentic Aḥādīth. Its plain and simple interpretation would be that this verse refers to entering the Hell for good, which is peculiar to the unbelievers. They will be tortured eternally in the Hell-fire. The sinful believers, on the other hand, will receive punishment for their sins and will eventually - at some time or the other - be taken out of Hell. Other scholars of Tafsīr have given some other interpretations too, which can also be appropriate. Tafsīr Maḥzarī has come up with another explanation according to which 'the wretched one' and 'the most God-fearing one' should not be taken in its general sense. Both words refer particularly to people who lived during the blessed time of the Holy Prophet ﷺ. From amongst them, no Muslim, who lived at that time, will enter Hell through the blessings of the Holy Prophet's ﷺ company, even though he might have committed some sins incidentally.

All of The Blessed Companions will be Saved from the Ordeal of Hell

The reason for this is that the Companions rarely ever committed sins. Furthermore, even if they did commit sins, they must have repented by dint of the fear of the Hereafter - as their living conditions indicate . If any of them committed a sin, his good deeds are so many that they can wipe out the sin as the Qur'ān says:

إِنَّ الْحَسَنَاتِ يُذْهِبْنَ السَّيِّئَاتِ

'...Surely good deeds erase bad deeds__[11:114]'

Adopting the company of the Holy Prophet ﷺ is an act that can outweigh all other good deeds. The Holy Prophet ﷺ is reported to have said regarding the righteous members of the community:

هم قوم لا يشقى جلسهم ولا يخاف انيسهم

'The one who sits with them is never deprived, and the one who feels happy in their company is never unsuccessful.' [Ṣaḥīḥain]

Obviously, a person who sits in the company of the Holy Prophet ﷺ and is his intimate associate cannot be wretched. Therefore, there are express texts available in the authentic Traditions that all the noble

Companions are safe from the punishment of Hell. The Qur'an itself bears testimony that -

وَكُلًّا وَعَدَ اللَّهُ الْحُسْنَى

'...and to each Allah has promised good [4:95]

Husnā in this statement refers to 'Paradise'. In another verse, the Qur'an says:

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ سَبَقَتْ لَهُمْ مِنَّا الْحُسْنَىٰ أُولَٰئِكَ عَنْهَا مُبْعَدُونَ

Surely, those for whom the good (news) from Us has come earlier shall be kept far away from it. [21:101]

Husnā in this statement also refers to 'Paradise'. The pronoun 'it' in the phrase 'from it' refers to 'Hell', signifying that they will be far away from Hell. A Tradition says that 'Hell-Fire will not touch him who has seen me'. [Tirmidhī transmitted it from Jābir رضي الله عنه].

وَالَّذِي يُؤْتِي مَالَهُ يَتَزَكَّىٰ (And saved from it will be the most God-fearing one who gives his wealth [in charity] to become purified,...92:17-18). This verse describes the reward of the most God-fearing person, as opposed to the punishment of the most wretched in the preceding verse. The word *atqā* is the superlative form and signifies a man of *taqwā*, that is, the most God-fearing person, who spends his wealth in obedience of his Lord in order to purify himself from sins, will be kept far away from the fire of Hell.

The wordings of the verse give good news, in general, to anyone who spends in Allah's cause in a state of faith, but the occasion of revelation indicates that *atqa* refers to Sayyidnā Abū Bakr Aṣ-Ṣiddiq رضي الله عنه in particular. Ibn Abī Ḥatīm reports from Sayyidnā 'Urwah رضي الله عنه that seven Muslims had been enslaved by the Makkan disbelievers. When they became Muslims, they were persecuted in a variety of ways. Sayyidnā Abū Bakr رضي الله عنه spent a great amount of his money, and purchased them and set them free. Verses [17-21] were revealed on this occasion. [Maḏharī]

وَمَا لِأَحَدٍ عِنْدَهُ مِنْ نِعْمَةٍ تُجْزَىٰ (while no one has conferred any favour on him for which he would give a return,...92:19) Sayyidnā Abū Bakr رضي الله عنه did this great favour by spending abundant wealth. The emancipated slaves had not done him any favour in the past, so that one could say that he was

returning their favour. He took this step for one purpose only as the verse says:

إِلَّا ابْتِغَاءَ وَجْهِ رَبِّهِ الْأَعْلَى (but [he gave his wealth in charity] only to seek the Countenance of his Lord, the Most High....92:20). Mustadrak of Hakim records that it was a usual practice of Sayyidnā Abū Bakr رضي الله عنه that he used to purchase Muslim slaves from the disbelievers and set them free whenever he found them in their bondage. Generally, these people were weak and helpless. Abū Qaḥāfah, the father of Abū Bakr رضي الله عنه, said to him: "Since you are emancipating slaves, why do you not set free strong and brave people, so that they may assist you in fighting the enemies and protect you." He replied: "My purpose of emancipating them is not to expect any benefit in return. My only purpose is to seek the pleasure of Allah." [Maḏharī]

وَلَسَوْفَ يَرْضَى (And surely he will soon be happy...92:21). Whoever spends in Allah's way with pure and good intentions of pleasing Allah, and not for any personal worldly gains, will acquire the pleasure of Allah in the Hereafter by achieving the wonderful and eternal blessings of Paradise. It is confirmed that these verses were revealed about Sayyidnā Abū Bakr رضي الله عنه. Therefore, this last verse of the Sūrah is a great and splendid news and honour for him given in this very world by Allah.

Alḥamdulillah
The Commentary on
Sūrah Al-Lail
Ends here